



Vermont AmeriCorps State PLANNING GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

2021 Planning Grants

Letter of Intent Deadline:
October 9, 2020, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
November 6, 2020, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

Agency of Human Services

Office of the Secretary

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ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont is Vermont's State Service Commission and is housed in the Agency of Human Services' Central Office. SerVermont's mission is to promote, support, and recognize volunteerism and community service throughout Vermont. SerVermont administers national service programs federally funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) including the AmeriCorps State program and an AmeriCorps VISTA umbrella project. SerVermont also manages volunteers in disasters and works with other national service and local partners to address pressing challenges in Vermont through service. SerVermont was established by Executive Order in 1993. The Governor appoints up to 25 individuals to serve three-year terms as members of the SerVermont Commission.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SerVermont announces the availability of AmeriCorps State formula funds to be awarded as Planning Grants to new AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for planning activities conducted in 2021.

SerVermont anticipates approximately \$60,000 to be available for planning grants. This RFP is not a guarantee of funding or a specific number of awards.

SerVermont solicits planning grant proposal through this RFP and makes determinations on which proposals will be funded. Planning grants are funded with formula dollars which are made available to every state and are awarded directly from State Service Commissions to grantees through processes developed by each state. Formula funding is awarded independently from the national AmeriCorps State competition. Any eligible applicant seeking to apply for AmeriCorps State Planning Grant funds in Vermont must respond to this RFP and all related deadlines.

SerVermont's Request for Proposals should be read together with the AmeriCorps State and National FY 2021 NOFO, 2021 Application Instructions, 2021 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, 2021 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents found on the CNCS website.

AmeriCorps State grants support a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. Applications must propose designing a program that will respond to **at least one** of the Focus Areas as outlined in the CNCS NOFO. Focus areas in which we seek to develop programming include: Disaster Services, Education, Veterans and Military Families, Seniors, the Opioid Crisis, COVID-

19, and Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.

SerVermont is interested in proposals which would develop programs that; (1) demonstrate high alignment with the CNCS Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) provide focused and effective solutions that address local community needs; (3) offer meaningful AmeriCorps member experiences; (4) align with existing State and local initiatives; (5) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results, and (6) are cost effective, generating high ratio of federal funds to local funds and/or bringing significant outside financial support to the initiative.

SerVermont seeks to support a strong and balanced portfolio of AmeriCorps programs that; (1) addresses a wide range of CNCS focus areas, including focus areas under which SerVermont does not currently support an AmeriCorps program, (2) has diverse state-wide geographic representation, including placing AmeriCorps members in historically underserved communities, and communities that do not have AmeriCorps resources present; (3) engages historically underserved populations as AmeriCorps members, including opportunity youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and individuals living in poverty. Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges, are responsive to the CNCS NOFA and Application Instructions, and those that leverage outside funding sources will be most competitive.

PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING GRANT

AmeriCorps planning grants allow organizations and consortiums to begin developing their plans to host an AmeriCorps program. Planning grant activities involve work to establish a new program in Vermont. Organizations use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the subsequent grant cycle. Activities that may take place under the grant include creating partnerships, developing position descriptions, developing member training, supervision and monitoring policies and procedures, and developing budgets. Planning Grants DO NOT provide funding for staff time spent fundraising or supporting AmeriCorps members.

AWARD / PROJECT PERIOD

Planning grants funded through this RFP are funded for 8 months. The anticipated project start date is January 1, 2021 and grants last up-to August 31, 2021. The project start date may not occur prior to CNCS awarding the grant. Grantees may not incur costs prior to the start of the planning grant contract.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within Vermont (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Tribes.

Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this RFP, and related CNCS documents. Organizations described in section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to apply.

All applicants must be able to comply with the Agency of Human Services' customary grant provisions and attachments.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, GRANT PROVISIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS

The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2021 NOFO and other materials can be found at the CNCS website: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2021/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2021>

Potential applicants should familiarize themselves with AmeriCorps programming by visiting the CNCS website.

More information on how AmeriCorps State and National programs are administered can be found on the CNCS website on the "Applying for AmeriCorps State and National Grants" page: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/ASNgrants>

Information on managing AmeriCorps grants can be found on the CNCS website on the "Managing AmeriCorps Grants" page: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/manage-americorps-state-and-national-grants>

A downloadable copy of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended by the Serve America Act and a downloadable copy of the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR Chapter XXV (2012) can be found at this link: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>

2021 GRANTS PROCESS

SerVermont will use a multi-step process that includes: 1) submission of a Letter of Intent, 2) technical assistance with concept development, 3) submission of a full planning grant proposal to SerVermont, 4) awarding funding, 5) submission of planning grant proposals through CNCS online system, eGrants.

The Letter of Intent allows applicants to express their interest in AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding, and briefly present the proposed program concept they plan to develop during the grant term. SerVermont staff will review all Letters of Intent and offer technical assistance to all

interested applicants to ensure strong planning grant designs and final applications are submitted.

Full application narratives and budget narratives will be submitted to SerVermont via PDF.

Ultimately, proposals that are selected for funding will need to be submitted through the eGrants system (www.egrants.cns.gov), but this will be done **after** funding decisions have been made by the commission.

INTENT TO APPLY

Applicants are **required** to submit Letters of Intent for AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@vermont.gov) by **October 9, 2020, 5 PM EST**.

Letters of Intent must be no longer than two typed pages, must be submitted in PDF format, and must include the following information:

Page 1: Cover Sheet

1. Legal Name of Applicant
2. Contact Person
3. Contact information including: address, phone, email and fax.
4. CNCS Focus Area that the program will address.

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept the grant will plan, including what members may be doing, and what research supports the proposed approach.

GRANT APPLICATION

Applicants are **required** to submit their Application for AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@vermont.gov) by **November 6, 2020, 5 PM EST**.

Applications must be no longer than six typed pages (not including the proposed budget), must be submitted in PDF format, and must include the following information:

Page 1: Cover Sheet

1. Legal Name of Applicant
2. Contact Person
3. Contact information including: address, phone, and email

Page 2-6: Program Concept and Planning Grant Proposal

1. A brief description of the general program concept the grant would plan, including what members may be doing, and what research supports the proposed approach.
2. What activities would occur during the planning grant period, including who would be doing them (staff or contractor) and what work products would be produced in the end.

Additional Pages: Budget

A proposed budget for the activities proposed, including line item costs, and match (must be at least 24%) must be submitted with the application. Please see CNCS' AmeriCorps Application Instructions for a sample budget format. SerVermont can offer assistance in developing a budget upon request.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

SerVermont requires that all applicants follow CNCS budget instructions. SerVermont encourages applicants to only propose as much match as they can **realistically** generate and meet while also meeting the minimum requirement (24%). Prior to submission of an application, applicants should double check their budgets to ensure that the math used to calculate various line items is correct, and the total request in the budget is accurate.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process will include reviewing proposals against the basic selection criteria included in this RFP, alignment or potential alignment with the AmeriCorps NOFO, and ensuring innovation and geographic, demographic, and programmatic diversity across the AmeriCorps State portfolio. In evaluating applications for funding, SerVermont staff and commissioners assess overall concept, organizational capacity to manage the grant and program, and budget adequacy. In order to maximize the impact of AmeriCorps resources in Vermont, SerVermont will fund planning grants that will develop programs which demonstrate community impact and solve community problems using **evidence-based** or **evidence-informed approach** (e.g. performance measure data, quality of research, theory of change).

The proposal should provide reviewers with a clear and compelling understanding of the applicant's desire to host an AmeriCorps program in the future, the need for the program in the community, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the stated need.

SUBMISSION OF APPROVED APPLICATIONS IN CNCS ONLINE SYSTEM

Once approved by SerVermont, applications will be submitted through CNCS' online system, eGrants. SerVermont staff will be available to provide training and technical assistance with submitting through the online system. This will occur after awards are made. Applicants may familiarize themselves with the information required for the application narrative and budget narrative by reviewing the CNCS AmeriCorps NOFO 2021 Application Instructions.

Applying through the eGrants system is considered part of the learning process for AmeriCorps grantees.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In an effort to develop a diverse portfolio of proposals and programs, SerVermont will offer technical assistance to all planning grant applicants as they develop their proposals. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in technical assistance:

Sharon Hearne, Program Officer Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov

Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov

Technical assistance regarding program design will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent from **October 9 to November 6**. Note that successful applicants will receive technical assistance during the planning grant project period as well.

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

ACTION	DATE
AmeriCorps Planning Grant Request for Proposals released by SerVermont	September 18, 2020
Technical Assistance Available to all by appointment (ongoing)	September 21, 2020 to October 8, 2020
Letter of Intent to apply and organizational risk assessment due to SerVermont	October 9, 2020 5:00pm
Technical Assistance Available to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent by appointment (ongoing)	October 12 – November 5, 2020
Applications due to SerVermont via email	November 6, 2020 5 PM EST
SerVermont Review of Proposals	November 9 – December 11, 2020

Funding decisions made by Commission	By December 11, 2020
Final Application submitted via eGrants	After December 11, 2020
Grant activities begin	January 1, 2021 or when CNCS finalizes awards.